

**MINISTER FOR HEALTH**

*Newspaper Comment - Personal Explanation*

**MR R.C. KUCERA** (Yokine - Minister for Health) [2.16 pm] - by leave: I rise to provide a personal explanation to the House in relation to a column by Paul Murray published in this week's edition of the *Sunday Times*. In that column Mr Murray referred to allegations made by a disgruntled former detective. I am led to believe that one of the allegations was that I had contrived with another police officer for that officer to commit perjury in a matter before the Industrial Relations Commission. I reject that allegation, which has never been formally put to me.

As members would be well aware, I spent 35 years of my life serving the Western Australian community as a police officer. I have lived within the law all my life. I loved the job and I always will. In my career in the Police Service, I was not only a frontline copper but also, during the last 15 years of my career, an operational manager. As a senior command officer, I was faced daily with decisions that affected the lives of up to 4 000 serving officers. In that context I was responsible for both their support and their direction. That meant making difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions every day - decisions that ensured the efficient, effective, safe and transparent delivery of policing services in this State.

Anyone in senior command or management positions - especially when actions affect people's lives, futures and careers - will make decisions that either individuals or entire organisations may vehemently disagree with. I was no different. I counselled, disciplined, charged, transferred and undertook actions that in some instances led to officers reconsidering their career choice. Mr Murray referred to one specific incident in which the officer affected vehemently disliked my decision. On that occasion the officer commenced proceedings in the Industrial Relations Commission on the basis that his transfer from one position to another was unfair, harsh and unwarranted. I addressed the matters raised by that officer as part of an internal grievance process and in evidence in the formal proceeding of the IRC. On hearing all the evidence, the IRC dismissed the application, as it found insufficient grounds to intervene in the managerial right to deploy staff in accordance with management's needs.

Regardless of the IRC's findings, I know that that officer remained unhappy with my decision. Had the officer genuinely believed at that time that the IRC's decision was flawed, he had the option of pursuing it through a range of appeal mechanisms. I am led to believe, however, that he took his complaint to the Anti-Corruption Commission. When I became aware that the Opposition was encouraging reporters to publish these allegations, I approached the Anti-Corruption Commission, as I am entitled to do, under section 26 of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act 1988. I would like to read, and then table, the response I received.

The SPEAKER: Personal explanations with regard to this matter - and I know it is very difficult - should not include an argument about what may or may not have happened. I ask the minister to confine his remarks to the situation at hand.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to read the response I received from the Anti-Corruption Commission. The letter states -

This Commission did consider certain allegations relating to you.

Attached to this reply is the correspondence I sent to the Anti-Corruption Commission. The letter continues -

The Commission is not permitted to divulge the name of the complainant.

The Commission considered a report on the allegations on 12 August 1998 and concluded that the allegations were unsubstantiated.

I trust the foregoing answers your queries.

I table that letter and the correspondence that went with it.

[See papers Nos 829 and 830.]

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Not only were my actions upheld by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, but also the allegation against me was rejected by the Anti-Corruption Commission. I felt it important today to put the facts on the record even though Mr Murray apparently doubts the credibility of the allegations. He wrote -

The former officer making these claims has recently said that he had undergone hypnosis to expunge his memory of his distressful time in the service. That was when he was being asked to remember any police bashings that might have taken place in his presence.

As a serving officer for some 35 years, it was my job to respect and uphold the law. As a member of this Parliament and as a minister of the Crown, it remains my responsibility to respect and uphold the law of this State. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly; I share this responsibility with all other members of this place.